

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT M 00738 090631Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2341
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY SUVA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0738

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PP PGOV PINT
SUBJ: PNG GENERAL ELECTIONS

1. CAMPAIGN IS IN FULL SWING, WITH 879 CANDIDATES CONTESTING
109 SEATS. VOTING STARTS 18 JUNE AND ENDS 9 JULY. WINNERS
WILL BE DECLARED FOR MOST AREAS BY 19 JULY, AND PARLIAMENT
SHOULD OPEN AROUND AUGUST 9. LEGAL CHALLENGES IN SOME
ELECTORATES COULD DELAY PROCESS SLIGHTLY.

2. THERE ARE AN AVERAGE OF 8 CANDIDATES PER ELECTORATE,
UP FROM 6 IN 1972, WHERE 611 CANDIDATES CONTESTED 100 SEATS.
LARGE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN SOME ELECTORATES (21 IN ONE
CHIMBU ELECTORATE) MAKE ASSESSMENT OUTCOME LITTLE MORE THAN
GUESSWORK. THERE ARE 16 NATURALIZED CITIZENS AND 9 WOMEN
RUNNING, AS AGAINST 35 EXPATRIATES AND 4 WOMEN IN 1972. AS
EXPECTED, CANDIDATES ARE GENERALLY BETTER EDUCATED THAN IN
1972. WHILE THERE ARE STILL NUMEROUS TRADITIONAL-TYPE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PORT M 00738 090631Z

CANDIDATES, PPP AND PANGU AND TO A LESSER DEGREE PAPUA
BESENA HAVE SOME EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATES DRAWN FROM
PUBLIC SERVICE. IN PREVIOUS ELECTION ONLY 114 OF 611 CANDIDATES
WERE OFFICIALLY ENDORSED BY PARTIES, WHILE THIS YEAR
289 HAVE BEEN ENDORSED BY THREE PRINCIPAL PARTIES (PANGU 79,
PPP 73 AND UNITED PARTY 137) AND PERHAPS ANOTHER 30 BY PAPUA
BESENA AND COUNTRY PARTY. IN ADDITION, MANY INDEPENDENTS

ARE RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM PARTIES.

3. WHILE IT WOULD APPEAR, ESPECIALLY IN CONTRAST TO 1972, THAT THE MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES ARE BEDDING DOWN SOME ROOTS, PARTY UNITY AND DISCIPLINE-EXCEPT FOR PPP AND PANGU-IS STILL EXTREMELY FRAGILE, AND DESIRE OF CANDIDATES TO SEEK PARTY ENDORSEMENT MAY WELL REFLECT INCREASED TEMPO OF CAMPAIGNING AND NEED FOR HEAVIER FINANCIAL BACKING THAN TRUE INCREASE IN PARTY LOYALTY. THREE MAIN PARTIES (PANGU, PPP AND UNITED) ARE EACH SPENDING IN EXCESS OF 100,000 KINA, AND MANY CANDIDATES ARE ADDING PRIVATE FUNDS AND FUNDS FROM PRIVATE BACKERS TO CAMPAIGN. THESE AMOUNTS GREATLY EXCEED CAMPAIGN COSTS OF 1972.

4. PRINCIPAL NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ISSUES IN 1972 AND 1977 DIFFER SHARPLY. IN 1972 PRINCIPAL ISSUE WAS QUESTION OF MOVING TOWARD SELF-GOVERNMENT. PANGU WAS ONLY PARTY OPENLY PUSHING FOR EARLY SELF-GOVERNMENT, WHILE UNITED PARTY ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNED TO POSTPONE MOVES TOWARDS IT. UP SUPPORT CAME FROM EXPATRIATES, HIGHLANDERS WHO FEARED COASTAL PNG "RADICAL" DOMINANCE AND OTHERS WHO FEARED SELF-GOVERNMENT WOULD MEAN DEPARTURE OF AUSTRALIAN AID, INVESTMENT AND PERSONNEL. UP CAMPAIGN TO STOP SELF-GOVERNMENT WAS PARTIALLY FRAUDULENT SINCE AUSTRALIA HAD ALREADY DETERMINED TO IMPLEMENT IT. UP LEADERS BELIEVED THEY WOULD OBTAIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT, BUT AT SAME TIME PLEDGED NOT TO FORM A SELF-GOVERNMENT MINISTRY.

5. COALITION-BUILDING, 1972: AUSTRALIAN ADMINISTRATION HAD
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT M 00738 090631Z

GROOMED UP MEMBERSHIP OF 1968 HOUSE (WHICH WAS JOINED BY CERTAIN PPP MINISTERIAL MEMBERS) TO BE FIRST PNG GOVERNMENT. THIS SCENARIO WAS UPSET WHEN UP DID NOT RECEIVE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. PANGU-FROM URGAN POWER BASES IN PORT MORESBY, WEWAK, AND LAE WHICH RADIATED OUTWARD INTO THEIR RESPECTIVE DISTRICTS, COUPLED WITH INDEPENDENT SUPPORT FROM OTHER MORE DEVELOPED AREAS (RABAU, BOUGAINVILLE AND COASTAL PAPUA)-WHEN JOINED BY PPP'S 10 MEMBERS, WAS ABLE TO FORM A COALITION. IN ESSENCE, IN 1972 THE TINY MODERN SECTOR OF PNG WAS ABLE TO SO ORGANIZE ITSELF THAT IT PREVAILED OVER THE MORE BACKWARD AREAS OF THE COUNTRY.

6. FROM 1972 TO 1977 PNG MOVED RAPIDLY FROM DEPENDENCE TO FULL INDEPENDENCE. IT WAS A PERIOD FULL OF NOISE AND HOPE AND RISING EXPECTATIONS AND OFTEN OF RASH AND CONFLICTING PROMISES. IN OUR JUDGEMENT THE PRINCIPAL NATIONAL ISSUE IN CURRENT CAMPAIGN IS WHETHER OR NOT SOME GOVERNMENT HAS DELIVERED ON ITS PROMISES. WHERE DISAPPOINTMENT EXISTS, IT IS BEING REFLECTED ETHNICALLY AND BY REGION, WHICH GIVES

IT A SHARP CUTTING EDGE AND PROMISE OF FUTURE POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES. CERTAIN AREAS, IN PARTICULAR, FEEL LEFT OUT OR CHEATED IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, AN ABSOLUTELY PREDICTABLE RESULT OF EXPECTATIONS RISING BEYOND CAPACITY OF ANY PNG GOVERNMENT TO MEET. DURING PAST 5 YEARS, BOUGAINVILLE'S PROTESTS HAVE BEEN THE NOISIEST, BUT THEY HAVE BEEN TEMPORARILY PACIFIED BY GRANTING OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED MANUS'S BELIEVE IT HAS BEEN FORGOTTEN. EXCESSIVE PROMISES MADE IN MOROBE WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN FULLY HONORED MAY SLIGHTLY ERODE PANGU'S STRENGTH THERE. THE TOLAIS BELIEVE THEY HAVE RECEIVED INADEQUATE DEVELOPMENT DESPITE THEIR SUPPORT OF SOMARE. BUT THE TWO CRITICAL GROUPS CONSIST OF HIGHLANDERS AND PAPUANS. THE HIGHLANDERS, HAVING FAILED TO PREVENT SELF-GOVERNMENT AND INDEPENDENCE UNTIL THEY "CAUGHT UP" WITH THE COASTAL AREAS, FEEL THEY ARE UNDERDEVELOPED, UNAPPRECIATED AND ISOLATED FROM MAINSTREAM OF PNG ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. THEY ARE DETERMINED TO HAVE A

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 PORT M 00738 090631Z

GREATER SAY IN NEXT GOVERNMENT. MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE OF PANGU STRENGTH MAY BE IN PAPUA, WITH PART OF ITS SUPPORT FLOWING TO PAPUA BESENA-WHICH HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT PAPUA HAS BEEN NEGLECTED-AND SOME OF IT FLOWING TO SIR JOHN GUISE AND A GROUP OF PAPUA INDEPENDENTS WHO EARLIER BROKE WITH SOMARE. WHAT WE ARE SEEING IS AN ALREADY NOSIY ETHNO-CENTRISM WHICH IS BEING AMPLIFIED BY CREATION OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS AND NEW SENSE OF SELF-IMPORTANCE ON PROVINCIAL LEVEL AND WHICH MAY FIND CONSIDERABLE REFLECTION IN CURRENT ELECTION.

7. IN RESPONSE TO THESE THEMES, INDIVIDUAL PANGU CANDIDATES, WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, ARE GENERALLY ATTEMPTING TO CASH IN ON PRIME MINISTER SOMARE'S POPULARITY, BUT TO WHAT EXTENT THEY WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE. SOMARE IS TRAVELING EXTENSIVELY THROUGHOUT COUNTRY EMPHASIZING PART PLAYED BY PANGU IN BRINGING COUNTRY TO INDEPENDENCE AND IN INTRODUCTION OF SUCH THINGS AS PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. IN ADDITION, SOMARE AND PANGU PROMISE TO CONTINUE GOOD WORK AND TO IMPLEMENT PANGU PLATFORM, MUCH OF WHICH CONCERNS ITSELF WITH FUTURE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

PPP IS ALSO STRESSING ITS PART IN PNG'S DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY ON ECONOMIC SIDE (WHICH MAY BE AN ADVANTAGE AS FOCUS MOVES FROM ESTABLISHMENT OF POLITICAL APPARATUS TO DEVELOPMENTAL THEMES), BUT PPP HAS MADE A VIRTUE OF LIMITING ITS PROMISES TO THOSE WHICH PNG CAN AFFORD. PPP MAY BENEFIT FROM THIS SINCE THERE HAS DEVELOPED A CERTAIN CYNICISM TO PAST INFLATED PROMISES BY POLITICIANS. THE UP, REVERSING ITS 1972 STANCE AND REFLECTING ITS ROLE AS OPPOSITION, HAS BEEN AGGRESSIVE AND FORCEFUL IN ITS ELECTIONEERING BOTH ON

NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL AND HAS CHARGED THAT COALITION HAS
HAD 5 YEARS TO DELIVER ON ITS PROGRAMS AND HAS BEEN FOUND
WANTING. UP HAS ALSO FOCUSED ON GOVERNMENT WASTE AND HAS
ACCUSED GOVERNMENT OF HAVING STOLEN 43 MILLION KINA DURING
LAST FISCAL YEAR (A FALSE CHARGE GROWING OUT OF AN AUDITOR'S
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PAGE 05 PORT M 00738 090631Z

REPORT SUBSEQUENTLY CORRECTED).

8. THE ABOVE EMPHASIS ON OVERALL THEMES IN CAMPAIGN DISTORTS
CONSIDERABLY UNDERLYING REALITY OF PNG. NEITHER NATIONAL
ISSUES NOR PARTY ORGANIZATION WILL DOMINATE OUTCOME OF
INDIVIDUAL ELECTORATES. THIS WAS TRUE IN 1972 AND IS ONLY
SLIGHTLY CHANGED IN 1977. THERE ARE, IN FACT, 109 CAMPAIGNS
IN PROCESS, EACH OF WHICH WILL BE PRIMARILY DETERMINED BY
FORCE OF INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES, LOCAL CLAN AND GROUP TIES,
TRADITIONAL AND IN SOME AREAS MORE MODERN INTEREST GROUPS,
AND A WIDE HOST OF PURELY PAROCHIAL PROBLEMS AND ISSUES.
AFTER MEMBERS ARE ELECTED, THEIR INCLINATION TOWARDS NATIONAL
ISSUES AND THEMES, CHARISMA OR ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY OF
SELECT PNG LEADERS, PATRONAGE AND PERHAPS A FRAIL SENSE OF
PARTY LOYALTY WILL AFFECT MANIPULATION WHICH PRECEDES
FORMULATION OF NEW COALITION. OUR VIEWS REGARDING THE
POSSIBLE COMBINATIONS IN NEW COALITION FOLLOW SEPTTEL.
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